

# Introduction to the Special Issue: Proceedings from the 2016 Atlantic Education Graduate Student Conference

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## Territorial Acknowledgement

The 5th Annual Atlantic Education Graduate Student Conference was held on Saturday, July 9th, 2016 at The University of New Brunswick, Faculty of Education, in Fredericton, located on the unceded traditional lands of Wolastoqiyik. As graduate students at the University of New Brunswick, we are grateful for the opportunity to study on the unceded traditional lands of Wolastoqiyik. We recognize that all visitors and New Brunswick citizens benefit from Wolastoqi stewardship of the land.

## Introduction

It was a privilege to be a part of creating space for a conference designed for becoming academics (Braidotti, 2013; Brogden, 2010). The aim of this annual conference is to promote the sharing of research among graduate students, researchers, educators and communities in the field of education situated within Atlantic Canada. It offers graduate researchers and educational communities the opportunity to come together to engage with varying perspectives on continuing and emerging issues related to education at all levels, research methods and methodologies, and challenges facing graduate students and educators today. The 2016 program featured presentations from graduate student researchers

from many regions of Atlantic Canada. This year, the AEGSC also welcomed tele-presenters from Newfoundland, P.E.I. and even from Çeşme, Turkey. The articles in this special issue are selected proceedings from the conference.

In the first article of this special issue, Amelia Thorpe raises issues related to gender identity and traditionally segregated spaces in universities and colleges. She asks where there are spaces for gender non-conforming students. Amelia discusses how “the regime of a gender dichotomy” (Rosenberg, 2004, p. 45) impacts students’ academic performance, overall health, access to accommodations, facilities, services and their safety while they study at university.

Lisa Weber and Gabrielle Young also engage with issues of inclusion in the second article. They present a literature review of four poignant articles addressing high school administrators and inclusion. They call for further research into inclusivity in education, suggesting that secondary level educators and families face their own unique sets of challenges.

In the third article of our special issue, Kristijana Tanfara explores the impacts of emotional and behavioral disorders on engagement in high school, and potential mitigations. She discusses Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) and Inclusive School Environments as data driven frameworks of support that help to promote a sense of belonging and reduce instances of dropping out.

In the fourth article, Sarah Johnson addresses the increasing popularity and importance of e-counselling within cultures of pervasive digital connectivity and online

communication. She discusses the key issues of trends in usage, risks and benefits, procedural and ethical considerations for worldwide counsellors. Sarah suggests that there is great potential for this innovative counselling practice.

In the fifth article, we journey with Karma Dema to Bhutan, where she explores the narratives of women who are educational leaders. Karma discusses the experiences of fifteen women who pursue careers of leadership within patriarchal hierarchal institutions where men are traditionally the leaders. Her research unveils some of the struggles and progress made by women educational leaders in Bhutan.

The sixth article is situated within multiple shifting nomadic spaces of one transnational family that lives between Turkey and Canada. Sherrie and Kerem Doğurga engage in a critical autoethnographic review of parts of their critical cultural journey from toddler and step-mom to collaborative academic authors.

In the seventh article, Joan Rostant turns our attention to diversity in education. She explores ethnocentrism, uncertainty tolerance, and phenomenological perspectives. She raises questions surrounding human connectivity and belonging as they may relate to reasons for disengagement in some students. She questions the rigidity of traditional perspectives on gender, religion, class and language.

The eighth article of the special issue, by Karla Culligan, explores connections between language and mathematics, focusing on the specific context of teaching and learning in bi/multilingual high school mathematics classrooms in urban New Brunswick. She shares specific dialogue between students that demonstrate the

intersecting nature of language and mathematics in bilingual classrooms.

In the ninth article, Mary MacPhee explores the experiences of non-francophone parents who have students in francophone schools in Atlantic Canada. She discusses the literature surrounding the importance of parent involvement in student achievement at school. Her research reports that non-francophone parents hold bilingualism in high regard and that the parents who receive the most support from schools reported the most positive experiences.

In the tenth article, Dianne Wilkins highlights issues surrounding First Nations students who are transitioning from community-based schools to public schools. While learning environments need to be responsible for meeting the academic needs of all students, Dianne suggests that this is not the case for First Nations' students in the complex educational landscape of New Brunswick. Dianne calls for an increased democratizing of policy with more involvement from First Nations.

The eleventh article, by Katharine Bartlett, provides an overview of her research into professional development, expectations and coaching within an English literacy program in Nunavut. She discusses the importance of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and then the role of English literacy in-service and coaching in developing a balanced literacy initiative.

Carolyn Wagner asks whether learning should be as much fun as a game in the twelfth article. Using her experiences as a pianist and a piano teacher as a starting point, Carolyn delves into a discussion of flow, a feeling of total immersion, creativity, and

involvement, in terms of engagement in gaming and practicing the piano. She suggests that flow is a useful lens for considering ways to motivate her students in music learning.

Samuel Leblanc explores teaching by example in the next article. Exemplars, he suggests, are an impactful methodology. By engaging with Aristotelian philosophy, Samuel questions knowledge and wisdom in search of intellectually virtuous students.

In the fourteenth article, Sasha Wood, Marie Olson, Brent Cruickshank and Catherine Holtman share a detailed description of their research project called AfterGrad NB. In light of research estimating that nearly 50,000 students have left New Brunswick in the past two decades, they explore what graduating high school students know about provincial labor markets and how the students make choices about post-secondary education.

In the fifteenth article, Kody Carlson, Jenny Rowett and José F. Domene share some of the narratives of university students who have completed a course in mindfulness. The results of their study support previous research that suggests mindfulness is a useful tool for university students.

In the sixteenth article, Eleni Karavanidou turns our attention to current views on the importance of handwriting in the context of rapid technological advances that may deem it no longer necessary for everyday life. She discusses the reasons for maintaining handwriting practice in technologically mediated times.

In the seventeenth article of our special issue, Junot Castelyn discusses an overview of research and protocols for

enhancing batterer intervention programs (BIPs). He shares research findings on the struggles associated with conducting and sustaining research into BIPs; ethical issues such as consent and privacy, high dropout rates, and putting women at repeated risk.

We close this special issue with the keynote address of the conference. Dr. Roger Saul addresses some of the concerns and contradictions, insecurities and surprises that come with graduate studies. He directly and humorously engages with issues that prevent graduate students from forming communities. He discusses some of the issues surrounding the experience of isolation at graduate school. Quoting famous authors who have had some similar feeling that students may have about writing, Dr. Saul encourages us to press on with our research and studies.

We would like to thank all researchers who attended the conference in person and by distance. Both the great response to the initial call for proposals and the overall attendance at the conference demonstrate the interest Atlantic Canadian researchers have in coming together to share within regional educational research communities. The conference was made possible by a Connection grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, many graduate student volunteers who helped throughout the year and on the day of the conference itself, and the generous support of the UNB Graduate Education Students Society and the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Ann Sherman. The conference is only possible with the constant support and guidance of Dr. José F. Domene, our faculty representative for the conference. A special thanks is extended to Elder Chris Brooks for his teachings, and for opening and closing ceremonies. We wish to thank Eleni Karavanidou for her efforts in coordinating the proposal review process. We would like to

acknowledge professors within the Faculty of Education at UNB who attended the conference, chaired and adjudicated our sessions. We would especially like to thank our supervisors, who take on immense responsibility and commit incalculable hours to each graduate student.

Though there was much excellent research shared at the 2016 AEGSC, prizes for outstanding presentations were awarded for best online presentation to Mary MacPhee for her paper titled “Experiences of Non-francophone Parents who have Children in Francophone Schools,” and for best poster presentation to Carolyn Wagner for her poster titled “Digital Gamification in Private Music Education”. Karla Culligan was recognized with a Best Ph.D Presentation Award for her paper titled “Using Classroom-Based Research to Explore Mathematics and Language”. In addition, Erma Appleby was recognized with a Best M.Ed Presentation Award for her paper titled “Valuing Formative Assessment in the High School Classroom”.

The 2017 AEGSC will be held on the June 24<sup>th</sup> at the UNB Faculty of Education in Fredericton. The conference theme is “Creative approaches to knowledge building and dissemination through graduate research in education.” We look forward to welcoming graduate researchers from across Atlantic Canada to attend in person and online.

## References

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Sherrie-Lynn Doğurga M.Ed. is a PhD student of Critical Studies in the Faculty of Education at The University of New Brunswick. She is a Canadian-Turkish mother-educator-researcher interested in the maternal and pedagogical practices of women who travel and teach, and their Third Culture Kids (TCK). Sherrie worked in a Turkish national school as a teacher/administrator for fifteen years. She has recently returned to Canada to continue her education.

Amelia Thorpe M.Ed. is a Critical Studies PhD student in the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick. Her research interests reflect her longtime advocacy efforts, and include gender identity, queer linguistics, identity construction, LGBTQ+ health, and intergenerational connectivity in sexual and gender minority communities.

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